Oral History Program
California State University, Sacramento, California

Oral History Interview

with

MINAYO (TANABE) IMADA
and
SUMAKO IMADA (aka FUKUMAN)

MARCH 29, 1988

By Mary T. Tsukamoto
Florin Japanese American Citizens League
Oral History Project

Japanese american
CITIZENS LEAGUE
FLORIN CHAPTER • • SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95828

PREFACE

In the summer of 1987, a small group of people from the Florin JACL met at Mary and Al Tsukamoto's home to plan a new project for the organization. Because of the unique history of Florin, we felt that there were special stories that needed to be preserved. The town of Florin, California was once a thriving farming community with a large Japanese American population. The World War II internment of persons of Japanese ancestry living on the west coast devastated the town and it never recovered. Today there is no town of Florin; it has been merged into the larger county of Sacramento. Japanese Americans who reside throughout the United States, however, have their origins from Florin or have relatives and friends who have ties to this community. The town may no longer exist, but the community continues to survive in people's hearts and memories.

Many hours have been devoted to interviewing former Florin residents. The focus of the interviews was on the forced internment and life in relocation camps, but our questions touched on other issues. We asked about their immigration to the United States from Japan, pre-war experiences, resettlement after the war and personal philosophies. We also wanted to record the stories of the people left behind; they were friends and neighbors who watched in anguish as the trains transported the community away.`

We have conducted these interviews with feelings of urgency. If we are to come away with lessons from this historic tragedy, we must listen to and become acquainted with the people who were there. Many of these historians are in their seventies, eighties and nineties. We are grateful that they were willing to share their experiences and to answer our questions with openness and thoughtfulness.

We owe special thanks to James F. Carlson, former Assistant Dean of American River College and to Jacqueline S. Reinier, Director of the Oral History Program at California State University, Sacramento. Without their enthusiasm, encouragement and expertise, we never could have produced this collection of oral histories. We also want to acknowledge the project volunteers, the Florin JACL which contributed financial support, and Sumitomo Bank for their corporate donation.

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER

Mary Tsukamoto, Historian and Redress Activist, Florin Japanese American Citizens League; author of We the People, a Story of Internment in America, Laguna Publishing, 1987.

INTERVIEW TIME AND PLACE

Minayo Imada (maiden name Tanabe) was interviewed and taped on March 29, 1988. Following Minayo's interview, her daughter, Sumako Imada (Fukuman) was interviewed on the same tape, side B.

TRANSCRIBING AND TRANSLATING

The interview was conducted in Japanese. Minayo Imada's translation was done by Kasumi Aomi. Sumako Imada's translation was done by Aileen Nakashima.

Translation editing was done by Isako Egawa, daughter of Sumako, Piedmont, California. Moderate corrections were made.

EDITING AND TYPING

Mary Tsukamoto reviewed and corrected some translation. Judy Sakaishi Fukuman and Isako Egawa did the final editing and typing.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Several pictures were provided by all members of the family. They were most enthusiastic about this project. Dan Inouye reproduced all the pictures.

APPENDIX

Dr. Ben Kobashigawa, an Ethic Studies instructor at California State University, San Francisco, provided the project with Steven Egawa's term paper . Steven is the great-grandson of Minayo and the grandson of Sumako.

TAPES AND INTERVIEW RECORD

Copies of the bound transcript and the tapes will be kept by the Florin Japanese American Citizens League and in the University Archives at the Library, California State University, Sacramento, 6000 J Street., Sacramento, CAlifornia, 95819.

Biographical Summary

Cataloguing Information

Date of Interview: March 29, 1988

Summary:

Minayo (Tanabe) Imada was born in Shoba Mando Machi, Hiroshima, November 5, 1892, to parents Zen (mother) and Uyema (father) Tanabe.

When she was 17 years old around 1910, she came as a picture bride having married Tatsuichi Imada a year before with his picture. She came to America expectantly, checked through Angel Island, and with this stranger who was Tatsuichi Imada, 10 years her senior (27 years old), she came to Sacramento. She had hoped and wished America would be a wonderful place.

They lived in Perkins and worked on the hops ranch. It was hard work. Later they moved to Fruitridge and Hedge Avenue farm, raised strawberries and planted Tokay grapes. There was the Sierra School nearby.

Sumako, a daughter was born on November 27, 1912. Three years later on April 1, 1915, a son, Tatsuo, was born. Other farm famileis moved near and soon the area was called Taisho-Ku (a cluster settlement named for Emperior Taisho [1912-1925]). They attended Sierra School (public) and needed a Japanese language school. Tatsuichi Imada offered space in his barn for the school and built a special cabin for the Japanese Language teacher to teach children.

Later a fine Taisho Hall was built (1926). Activities of cultural and educational sports was sponsored there providing opportunities for Nisei's education and leadership experiences.

Executive Order 9066 after Pearl Harbor drove the Imada's with 2500 farm people from the Florin area into Internment Camps. The Imada's were sent to Fresno and then to Jerome, Arkansas, and Rohwer and some scattered to Gila, Heart Mountain, and elsewhere when Jerome closed in 1944.

When the exclusion ban was lifted, the Imada's learned their barn was burned. As members of the Florin Fruit Growers' Association, they had entrusted their farm to George Fiel, who rented it out. The people who first rented it did not stay long. George's brother ran the farm awhile. Then others--no one knows who. In the meantime, all their possessions they had left and stored in their house and barn were gone. They were shocked and devastated when we came home and saw the place.

They had learned the renters had used the barn for dances. The accident then caused the fire. They lost much and the WRA did not give them their token check like they did to others who did not own their land. They hurried to San Francisco to the insurance company for the loss from the fire.

Minayo stated, "We had many regrets:

"1. We spent so much money sending Sumako to Japan to be educated and marry there. It was a bad decision and her marriage was a disaster.

"2. Our son, Tatsuo, became a Kendo expert and enthusiast but his body could not take it and he died young.

"My joy and gratitude is that I am alive and lived a long time in America, a good place. My seven grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren are nice to me and I am fortunate to have such a nice family who cherish me. They gave me a gala 88th birthday party I will never forget.

"At 97 [she says 92], I can still grow vegetables, enjoy reading books and magazines and watch TV."

At age 98, in 1990 November 10, Minayo received her redress check from the United States Government and the letter of apology from President George Bush.

The following spring 1991, she started to fail in health. At 98-1/2 years of age, she passed away.

A great courageous indomitable spirit completed her journey on earth. She left a wonderful legacy for her daughter, her grandchildren, great-grandchildren and others.

Mary Tsuruko Tsukamoto

March 29, 1988

Interviewee: Minayo Imada

9215 Fruitridge Road, Sacramento, CA 95826

Interviewer: Mary T. Tsukamoto

(Begin Tape 1, Side A)

TSUKAMOTO: How are old are you now?

IMADA: I am 93 or 94 (in background her daughter says 93)

TSUKAMOTO: How old were you when you came?

IMADA: I was 17.

TSUKAMOTO: You were seventeen? Then it must have been 1911 when you came. It's been a long time.

IMADA: Yes it was either 1910 or 1911.

TSUKAMOTO: You came to live here?

IMADA: No. I first came to hops ranch in Perkins and stayed one year and then moved in October or

November to the farm here, so its been a long time. Both Sumako and Tatsuo were born here.

TSUKAMOTO: How did you feel when you first arrived in America when you were only 17?

IMADA: And all my neighbors in Japan asked me my reasons for going to America. I told them to make a lot of money. That was the only thought for coming.

TSUKAMOTO: When you arrived in San Francisco, what were your thoughts and feelings?

IMADA: I didn't think one way or another.

TSUKAMOTO: Were you glad? Did you know Imada-san before?

IMADA: No I didn't know him because it was a picture marriage. Before I came, my aunts asked me what I would do if I was disliked by him, so I said that I would quickly come back.

TSUKAMOTO: You must have been concerned because you didn't know what kind of person he was and you had never seen him before.

IMADA: I came to America, with a person that came from the same area as he did. She went to Los Angeles.

TSUKAMOTO: Around that time must had been the beginning of picture marriages.

IMADA: Probably it was the beginning of those kinds of marriages. I think we were the among the first. We were sent to Angel Island.

TSUKAMOTO: How many days did you stay in Angel Island?

IMADA: I was able to leave right after the inspection, but my friend who went to Los Angeles was detained there for much longer. Besides her, there was Suyekawa-san who used to live on Elder Creek Road, who also was detained there for a long time, but she was given permission to leave, just before Christmas, as a present for her husband.

TSUKAMOTO: It must had been worrisome to think that you might not be able to leave.

IMADA: There were many women who came the same time as I. Matsuo-san's wife came the same time as I. Matsuo-san operated a store in Sacramento. She couldn't

land at Angel Island because she came on second class passage.

TSUKAMOTO: If you came as second class, you couldn't land at Angel Island?

IMADA: I remember it to be that way.

TSUKAMOTO: Who were some of the other people who came with you besides Matsuo-san?

IMADA: Matsumoto-san, who had a store "Matsumoto Shoten", but who had also been a partner with my husband in operating hops ranch. We bought all our food from his store.

TSUKAMOTO: What were your thoughts when you were at hops ranch when you were only a young bride of 17?

IMADA: I gave my work at the ranch to other people, so I myself went to work at other places. I worked eleven hours a day, and received one dollar.

TSUKAMOTO: Eleven hours!

IMADA: Yes, in those days we worked eleven hours.

TSUKAMOTO: One dollar?

IMADA: Yes, now days you receive much more than that for even an hours work. But in those days it was one dollar for a whole days work.

TSUKAMOTO: What kind of work did you do?

IMADA: Hoeing, pruning, stringing lines for hops and thinning buds.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, is that so? When did you start raising strawberries?

IMADA: We started after we move here.

TSUKAMOTO: It must have been hard work for you. Your back must have ached from bending down.

IMADA: But I was a farmer in Japan.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, you were a farmer?

IMADA: Yes.

TSUKAMOTO: What part of Japan did you come from?

IMADA: From the country, in Hiroshima-ken.

TSUKAMOTO: What was the name of the place in Hiroshima?

IMADA: It's now called Shobara-shi, Monde-machi, which is where I was born.

TSUKAMOTO: Grandmother Tsukamoto came from Midorie and grandfather Tsukamoto came from Misasa-machi (both places are close to Hiroshima-shi).

IMADA: Then she's a little older than me.

TSUKAMOTO: Yes, she came in 1922 when she was 22 years old. When they were married in 1895, she was 15 years old.

IMADA: Yes, in those day people married young.

TSUKAMOTO: But she said that she didn't want to come to America because she was too young so she came seven years later.

IMADA: I was 16 when I got married and came here when I became 17. They thought 16 was a little too young and I should at least be 17 when I arrive in San

Francisco. I didn't have any problem with that. There were immigrants and "heminin" which were a little higher up. Immigrants received their ticket at Kobe.

TSUKAMOTO: What would you like to talk about? What was the best thing that happened to you since you came to this country, that you would want to leave and tell as a legacy to all of your grandchildren and great-grandchildren?

IMADA: I don't have anything particular in mind, but I feel blessed because all my grandchildren and great-grandchildren has been good to me.

TSUKAMOTO: How many grandchildren and great-grandchildren do you have?

IMADA: I have 7 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

TSUKAMOTO: You were blessed.

IMADA: They all came to wish me on my eighty-eighth birthday party (in Japanese custom, the eighty-eighth birthday is a very important birthday to celebrate). I only have one child left because

Tatsuo died early.

TSUKAMOTO: Aren't you glad to live long since you have so many grand and great-grandchildren.

IMADA: My great-grandchild is getting married. I don't know what I would say when great-great grandchild comes along.

TSUKAMOTO: I hope you would "gambaru" (bear up).

IMADA: I don't think that I have much longer to live.

TSUKAMOTO: But, you are still going strong!

IMADA: I guess that I am doing fine because I do go outside every day and do hoeing and shovel work. That's why I am dark.

TSUKAMOTO: Oh, you go outside and do those things everyday?

IMADA: Yes, and also I plant some vegetables.

TSUKAMOTO: You raise too?

IMADA: Yes, and weeding all around the house. I won't go

outside if its too windy though. But otherwise, I stay outside most of the day. If I stay inside, I look at TV or read books. But its not good for my eyes.

TSUKAMOTO: Do you read books too?

IMADA: Yes, I read Japanese magazines, but not English.

TSUKAMOTO: Your eyes must be good if you read magazines.

IMADA: Normally I don't use glasses except when I read.

TSUKAMOTO: I do need eye glasses to read too. Do you watch TV?

IMADA: Yes, but the only thing I do is look at the images because I don't understand English.

TSUKAMOTO: Grandma Tsukamoto used to enjoy watching drama everyday, even though she didn't understand English, but I think she understood most of it.

IMADA: She used to go see baseball games because she had lots of time, but I didn't have the time to see any baseball games so I don't understand any sports

games. We had a forty acre farm which took all our time to manage, so there wasn't time to watch things.

TSUKAMOTO: You really went through and had to endure hardship.

IMADA: We used to send our children to Japan to get Japanese education, so we were without children's help. Mrs Furukawa, who was our next door neighbor, used to tell me that I did well all by myself, but I really didn't have much choice. She had many children who used to help her, so she had a much easier time. The only thing I could do was work.

TSUKAMOTO: Tatsuo used to help with kendo a lot and so did Imada-san.

IMADA: But their enthusiasm backfired. Since my daughter was in Japan, I went back to visit her, two or three times. On the way I thought that Japanese education was very important. On the return trip, I cried and wondered why I did leave her behind. Therefore I kept going back to see her. I used to travel on a ship which took 17 to 18 days. Now days you can fly.

TSUKAMOTO: It took about 2 to 3 weeks?

IMADA: Yes, it took at least 17 to 18 days.

TSUKAMOTO: You sure did have a hard time.

IMADA: Yes, but on the account of that I was fortunate because I have my daughter and grandchildren, who are good to me.

TSUKAMOTO: You seem to be in excellent health. Don't you ever get sick?

IMADA: Yes, I haven't had any major sickness.

TSUKAMOTO: When did Imada-san pass away?

IMADA: He passed away in 1966.

TSUKAMOTO: Its been 22 years.

IMADA: He was 82 years old when he died. I used to say that I won't be able to reach 82, but now I'm 92. I haven't sent any letters to Japan since my older brother died, so they probably think that I'm dead, since I am old. My brother died when he was 82 or

83, so my niece and relatives probably think that I'm dead too. My brother didn't have any children, so he adopted my younger sister's daughter, Chieko. When I went back to Japan after forty years of absence, I was planning to stay about 6 months, but I became homesick for America after 2 months. My brother said since I am not working, I should stay until fall, so I could eat the new crop of rice, but I think American rice is tastier.

TSUKAMOTO: America is better because you had been living here a long time.

IMADA: Yes, that right. I don't want stay too long in Japan, because I get homesick.

TSUKAMOTO: You worked a long time. You must have raised grapes and strawberries.

IMADA: Yes, also fruits too.

TSUKAMOTO: What kind of fruits?

IMADA: Peaches and plums. Then we got rid of those and planted grapes.

TSUKAMOTO: So for all the forty acres, did you plant grapes with strawberries in between.

IMADA: We planted strawberries in the beginning, but later mostly grapes.

TSUKAMOTO: When the Taisho-ku hall was built, you and Imada-san helped.

IMADA: Yes, in those days we were very active. But now days, the nisei are doing most of the work.

TSUKAMOTO: In those days, wasn't there a Japanese school at the Taisho-ku hall.

IMADA: The previous hall was burned down during the war and the present one is the second one.

TSUKAMOTO: When was the original hall built?

IMADA: I don't remember (in the background, the daughter said 1926 or 1927).

TSUKAMOTO: The Florin church hall was also built in 1928 and Miwa-sensei was there and maybe Taisho-ku hall was built around the same time.

IMADA: The Tsukamoto family helped the Florin church the most.

TSUKAMOTO: There were a lot of families in Taisho-ku.

IMADA: Yes, there were a lot before the war. But after the war, only a few returned.

TSUKAMOTO: I remember that there was a Japanese school at the hall, but I don't think that it was everyday. Was it only on Saturday?

IMADA: I don't remember (daughter say it was everyday, right after grammar school). Before the hall was built, it used to be at my house.

TSUKAMOTO: There was a Kobayashi-sensei wasn't there?

IMADA: I can't remember the first one, but the second one was Sakuma and the third was Koyayashi-sensei (daughter says that Mrs. Sakai also taught too).

TSUKAMOTO: Was the Japanese school held in your barn?

IMADA: No, there was a small building built in front of the barn. My husband was strict and when the kids

used to play ball and the ball got into the grape field, he used to get mad. Therefore the kids didn't like him. That's why the bigger hall was built.

TSUKAMOTO: The original hall must have had a lot things stored in it, when it burnt.

IMADA: Yes, I think there were a lot of things. Before we left for camp, two or three families from Oakland lived in it.

TSUKAMOTO: The Florin also had some people from Oakland, before we went to camp. I'm sure it must of been a big loss when it burnt.

IMADA: My daughter-in law's things were store there, but my things were stored here. We rented the farm to white people, with the things stored in it.

TSUKAMOTO: Did they take good care of the place while you were away?

IMADA: The people were truckers and of not very good character. Since the kitchen was large, they invited their friends and had dances in the kitchen

and started a fire. Since we only had fire insurance for a few months, the company said that we would have to go to San Francisco to receive payment in April or May. So my husband returned from camp early, in 1945, to get payment for the fire. Instead of going back to camp, my husband stayed to clean up the mess. Then he rented the house to someone else. When we came back, there was nothing left. In those days, we didn't have anything that was very expensive.

Going back to your earlier question, I just remembered the Japanese school teachers, they were Takezaki-sensai, Sakuma-sensai, Kobayashi-sensai and Takai-sensai. Takezaki-sensai, who had three children, didn't have a place to live so they lived in the little house behind ours.

TSUKAMOTO: What happened after you left camp. I understand that you didn't receive any money when you were released.

IMADA: Although some of the other people received some money, we didn't get any because we still owned our land. Still we couldn't eat the dirt. I returned here in June of 1945. Since the house was still

being rented to someone named George, we converted part of the barn to live in. The Wakabayashi's (Mrs. Imada's cousin) returned to this farm in July and since we didn't have a place for them to live, we built the small house next to ours. Mr. Wakabayashi was a dentist in Japan and when he came here, he worked as a dental technician.

Since George's lease on the farm wasn't up, we worked for him until the grapes were harvested. After he left, we then raised our own.

TSUKAMOTO: How long did you raise grapes after that?

IMADA: Probably four or five years. But we also raised strawberries with the grapes. Since our son had died, and my daughter was in Japan, we were getting lonely and thought of returning to Japan. But it was difficult to sell the land for cash, we decided to stay and we raised my son's two grandchildren, Saki and Takao. Kimi stayed with the mother in Fresno.

TSUKAMOTO: When did your daughter Sumako, return to the United States?

IMADA: In order for my daughter to return here easily, she changed her name to here maiden name, Imada. I don't remember when Sumako came, but Isako (granddaughter) came first (October 5, 1955) because she had citizenship and should attend school to learn English. A year later, Sumako came with Hiroko, Takeo and Yoshio.

TSUKAMOTO: Who were some of your friends in this neighborhood?

IMADA: Kadoya-san, Taneguichi-san, Inoye-san Sasai-sai and Umeda-san. Except for Kadoya-san, who still live next door, they all left the farm to go to live in the city.

TSUKAMOTO: It's been a long time, you sure remember a lot.

IMADA: No, I'm getting old, its hard to remember, I think my minds getting to be like a pumpkin (laugher).

TSUKAMOTO: Well I think that concludes the interview. This tape will be used as an oral history and will translated into English. A copy of the tape will be given to the family for them to retain.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

SUMAKO IMADA (former married name FUKUMAN) was born on November 27, 1912, in Florin, California (Taisho-Ku).

Sumako had a hard life as the eldest child and daughter of mother Minayo and father Tatsuichi Imada. She was betrothed in Japan when she was 16 years old. She studied there for five years, came to America and wanted to go to high school but her parents objected saying, "girls did not need an education." She regretted being sent back at age 18 to learn cultural classes, such as tea ceremony, flower arrangement, etc. Four years later, she was married in 1936 to Mr. Chiaki Fukuman, a typical Japanese man who was boss and did not appreciate and value his wife. They had four children by 1956--two daughters, Isako (49) and Hiroko (45), and two sons, Takeo (44) and Yoshio (39).

Mr. Fukuman went to China for one-and-a-half years of service in 1937-38.

In 1955, Sumako decided to leave her husband and came to America with her children in 1956. The eldest child, Isako, was a freshman in high school. She was fourteen or fifteen and was automatically a citizen of the United States since she was born before 1940 and the offspring of an American citizen. The other three became American citizens after age eighteen. Isako is 49 years old and a fine Sansei who is bilingual.

Many things has happened to Sumako. She is glad she came back to America. The most important thing was that she was able to give her four children a chance for a fine education. Her life was a tough struggle. Because she was not educated in America, the only job she was able to get was at Oki Nursery. She was ill with tuberculosis for five years and had to be admitted to Weimar.

The next tape interviews Mrs. Imada's daughter Sumako Imada.

TSUKAMOTO: When you born?

SUMAKO: November 27, 1912.

TSUKAMOTO: So you will be 76 and you were born in Taishoku and went to Sierra School. When did you go to Japan?

SUMAKO: I was about 10.

TSUKAMOTO: How did you feel about going to Japan?

SUMAKO: The first time, I didn't feel anything except perhaps curiosity.

TSUKAMOTO: Did you enjoy school in Japan?

SUMAKO: They used to tease me because I came from America. We used to be called 'Ameco'.

TSUKAMOTO: Do you think it was jealousy?

SUMAKO: Maybe part jealousy, part curiosity.

TSUKAMOTO: Did you stay with your grandmother?

SUMAKO: Yes, we lived on the farm, but later we lived in a rented house in the small town of Shobala because the school was better.

TSUKAMOTO: So your parents had to send money back to Japan for you and your grandparents to live.

SUMAKO: It was only my grandmother from my father's side, since my grandfather had already passed away. I didn't really know him.

TSUKAMOTO: How long were there first?

SUMAKO: The first time, I stayed about 5 years and then came back here for 3 years and then returned back to Japan.

TSUKAMOTO: Yes I remember you and we gave you a farewell party when you to return.

SUMAKO: I really wanted to stay here to go to high school, but my parents felt that a women doesn't need an education and should return to Japan to learn its customs.

TSUKAMOTO: So you went to high school here?

SUMAKO: No I didn't, I was sent back even before finishing grammar school here. In those days, they felt that women didn't need education. Even today, although she feels a little different, she still basically thinks that way. Because I didn't have a high school education, I could only get a laborers job. That's why I want my kids to have a good education.

TSUKAMOTO: I remember that you were so pretty, when we gave you that farewell party.

SUMAKO: You girls gave me a necklace, which I kept for a long time.

TSUKAMOTO: When you went back, what did you do?

SUMAKO: I learned flower arrangement, tea ceremony and Japanese sewing and got married. But the marriage didn't work out.

TSUKAMOTO: And all the time, your parents sent money.

SUMAKO: Yes, but when I think back they wasted their money. If I stayed and finished high school, it would have

been better. I think my mother also now realizes that.

TSUKAMOTO: How old were you when you got married?

SUMAKO: I was 24.

TSUKAMOTO: What was your thoughts, when your marriage was arranged?

SUMAKO: I was not too happy.

TSUKAMOTO: What was he like?

SUMAKO: He was a typical Japanese man. He wanted me to do everything what he said.

TSUKAMOTO: So if you were 24, it must have been around 1936 when you got married?

SUMAKO: Yes, it was April 1, 1936 (laugher). April fools day.

TSUKAMOTO: So you had four children and how long were you married to him?

SUMAKO: About 20 years.

TSUKAMOTO: What did you do during the war in Japan?

SUMAKO: I was a housewife.

TSUKAMOTO: What did your husband do, did he have to go to war?

SUMAKO: He went to war in China, a year after we got married, for a year and a half.

TSUKAMOTO: How old were your children when they came to this country in 1956?

SUMAKO: My oldest (Isako) was a high school freshman, so she must have been 14 or 15. She came in 1955, a year ahead of me. She came first because she had American citizenship.

TSUKAMOTO: How did she get American citizenship?

SUMAKO: Before 1940, children born to US citizens, were automatically US citizens also. So Isako had an easier time to come. It was more difficult for the other three, since I had to apply to the consulate many times.

It was my idea for Isako to come here and become a 'school girl' (a live-in), working and living with a family to earn money and learn English, while going to McClatchey (for one year, she first went to Sierra Enterprise Grammar school as a sixth grader to learn English, then went to McClatchey). While at McClatchey, she got tuberculosis and was sent to the Weimer Sanitorium for treatment where she also attended sanitorium school. When she got well, she came back to Elk Grove High to finish. Hiroko and the rest of the children went to Elk Grove.

TSUKAMOTO: So your youngest (Yoshio) finished university at Cal? (Takeo graduated from Sac State, Isako and Hiroko graduated from Sacramento City college).

SUMAKO: Yes, and all that time I didn't have any savings since they were all going to school.

TSUKAMOTO:: Your husband couldn't help you in any way?

SUMAKO: I wouldn't ask him.

TSUKAMOTO:: In Japan they didn't have any alimony?

SUMAKO: Even if offered, I wouldn't take it.

TSUKAMOTO:: Didn't he want to help his children?

SUMAKO: I don't know.

TSUKAMOTO:: Don't the children hear from him?

SUMAKO: I think they do.

TSUKAMOTO:: They could read Japanese enough to read his letters?

SUMAKO: The two oldest ones do. The oldest one (Isako) can read and write Japanese, that's why she was working at Sumitomo Bank.

TSUKAMOTO:: I guess that since Isako is third generation, she's a sansei. But she was born in Japan so she's also an issei (laughter), but she thinks like an sansei.

SUMAKO: The only thing good about coming back, is that the kids have a better chance here. There's better opportunities here.

TSUKAMOTO:: So you've been working all this time at Oki

Nursery?

SUMAKO: Yes, it has been 20 years. It's been rough, because I had TB and had surgery, and then went to work there later.

TSUKAMOTO:: So you went to Weimar also?

SUMAKO: Yes, I was there for 15 months, since I had to stay 6 months after the surgery. After that I stayed home for 5 years, because my arm wouldn't raise.

TSUKAMOTO:: How did you manage financially?

SUMAKO: I received welfare. Then I started working again, so the kids could go to school. I started at Oki when I was 52 and retired when I was 72. So I receive a little social security, which I get by on.

In Japan, the fortune tellers used to tell me that I wouldn't be happy married, no matter how many times I married. And in middle age my life would be rough, and in old age my life would be happy. I guess that's come true. All my responsibilities are over, except for my mother. Yoshio, who's 39, is

still not married. I keep asking when he's going to get married and he says "anytime, anytime". But I don't know, but he's not going to listen to me anyway (laughter).

TSUKAMOTO:: You've had a difficult time, but you look good for being 76.

SUMAKO: Yes, but except for the gray hairs (laughter).

TSUKAMOTO:: So you can take it easy now, and be a grandmother. How many grandchildren do you have?

SUMAKO: I have three grandsons, the oldest is 21, Stevie is 18 and Cory is 15. The oldest has a Chinese girl friend, who is a medical student. She's smarter than he is (laughter).

TSUKAMOTO:: What does his father do?

SUMAKO: He's a civil engineer.

TSUKAMOTO:: Now days, the younger people have professions, unlike before. That's why education is important.

SUMAKO: Yes, 4 years of college is not enough and many

people get their master's degree.

TSUKAMOTO:: Well, thank you for the interview.